

building blocks of strong democracy, and it works directly with Iraqi partners and hundreds of local civic organization.

Both IRI and NDI want to continue to build these essential links between the government and political parties, in order to enable the government become more responsive and effective in addressing the needs of Iraq's people.

Despite the impressive contribution of these two Institutes to democracy in Iraq, neither is guaranteed steady future funding for its programs. The administration's budget provides only \$7.5 million for each Institute—enough for just 2 months of operating expenses. Our amendment provides an additional \$22 million for each institute's essential democracy programs in Iraq for the next 18 months.

The amendment also provides \$8.5 million for the U.S. Institute of Peace for its important work to promote reconciliation.

This amendment has broad support in the democracy community, and I ask unanimous consent to print letters supporting it in the RECORD at the end of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.
(see exhibit 1.)

Mr. KENNEDY. Thousands of Iraqis are working hard, often at great risk to themselves, to develop civic groups, participate in political parties and election, and run for and serve in political office. The dramatic pictures of Iraqis waving their purple fingers after voting in past elections remind us of the enormous stakes.

Progress to avoid civil war and defeat the insurgency is directly related to progress on democracy-building, and ongoing work on this all-important issue must be a top priority.

We must be clear in our commitment to stand by these organizations that are working on the front lines in the struggle for democracy in Iraq every day. We also need to demonstrate to Iraqis and others that we are committed to Iraq's long-term democratic development. We need a long-term plan and a long-term strategy that is backed by appropriate resources.

President Bush has called for patience in Iraq. He should heed his own advice. He can't speak about having patience for democracy in Iraq, and then cut funding for the groups that are assisting so capably in its development.

Our financial commitment to the organizations at the forefront of the democracy effort must be strong and unambiguous. By failing to guarantee continuity for their programs, we send a confusing signal that can only be harmful for this very important effort.

We are now spending more than \$1 billion a week for military operations for the war in Iraq. At this rate, it would take the military less than one day to spend the \$104.5 million provided in this amendment for democracy promotion. Surely, we can commit this level of funding for democracy programs over the next 18 months.

Regardless of whether we supported or opposed the war, we all agree that the work of building democracy requires patience, skill, guaranteed continuity, and adequate resources.

It makes no sense to shortchange Iraq's political development. We need a long-term political strategy, and we must back up that strategy with the needed resources, if we truly hope to achieve a stable, peaceful and democratic Iraq.

Our amendment provides the resources necessary to ensure continuity in these democracy programs in Iraq. I thank Senators MCCONNELL and LEAHY for their hard work on this provision, and I am delighted that it will become part of this legislation.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY,
Washington, DC, April 24, 2006.

Hon. TED KENNEDY,
Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR KENNEDY: On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Endowment for Democracy, we are writing to thank you for your commitment to creating a viable and sustainable democracy in Iraq.

As you know, the National Endowment for Democracy received the first of several awards from the Department of State in February 2004 to support programs carried out by our four core institutes, the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), and the Solidarity Center. In addition, NED directly funds local Iraqi groups focusing on the promotion of women in the democratic process, strengthening an independent media, and increasing youth participation in the political process. After our September 2006 Board meeting, NED will not be able to maintain its current program in Iraq without renewed funding.

Should funding for democracy programs in Iraq be available for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2006 and into Fiscal Year 2007, the Endowment will facilitate the development of a nationwide coalition of local groups that crosses geographic, ethnic and confessional lines, which will advocate for political tolerance, accountable governance, rule of law and rational use of national resources. Also, NED will continue to fund CIPE, which has a developed network of over 40 business associations and chambers of commerce. CIPE's program will support Iraqis in building a platform for moderate and market-oriented approaches in Iraq's political process. Further, NED will provide funding to the Solidarity Center to support local Iraqi trade unions in developing policy platforms and advocating for labor legislation, and working with the Iraqi oil unions to develop their capacity to be a force for promoting transparency, anti-corruption, and the rule of law in Iraq's largest economic sector.

The Endowment is committed to supporting the Iraqi people in developing a democratic culture and creating institutions that will promote individual rights and freedoms. This will be a long-term endeavor, and we thank you for your continuing support and dedication on this important issue.

Sincerely,

VIN WEBER,
Chairman of the Board
RICHARD A. GEPHARDT,
Vice-Chair of the Board.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE,
Washington, DC, April 25, 2006.

Hon. EDWARD KENNEDY,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR KENNEDY: I am writing to express our deep appreciation for your commitment to long-term democracy building efforts in Iraq. Your leadership in this issue has allowed non-profit organizations such as NDI to continue to help courageous Iraqis struggling for a more democratic and open society. The long-term success of America's efforts in Iraq will ultimately rest on our ability to empower these Iraqis to overcome a long history of isolation, dictatorial rule, and ethnic division.

With the support of Congress, the National Endowment for Democracy, USAID, and the Department of State's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, NDI has, since 2003, developed a sizeable program that works to strengthen civil society, political parties, governing-institutions, and women's political participation and leadership. With seven offices throughout the country, NDI employs more than 200 Iraqi program staff and 30 full-time international staff from Canada, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Serbia and the United States. An additional 30 practitioners from the U.S. Canada, Eritrea, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom have regularly visited Iraq to share expertise with their Iraqi counterparts.

NDI's program works directly with Iraqis almost exclusively outside the Green Zone to build the critical linkages between Iraqi citizens and government that are necessary for long-term legitimacy of, and participation in the country's new democratic system. The Institute has trained more than 6,000 political party and 3,000 women activists, provided best international practices on issues such as federalism and human rights to key Iraqi decision-makers and the Constitutional Drafting Committee, and helped more than 150 nascent NGOs deploy more than 30,000 election monitors for the two national elections and constitutional referendum. Many of the same NGOs have, with NDI support, led town hall meetings for more than 300,000 Iraqis on the new constitution and the workings of the parliament.

Building democratic institutions and processes, beyond elections is a long-term proposition. In parts of Eastern Europe alone, the United States, through organizations such as NDI, continues to be engaged after the region's initial transition 16 years ago. Iraq will likely require an even longer international engagement. With the recent election of the first parliament under a new constitution, the real work in Iraq is just beginning. And, NDI remains committed to the long-term democracy programs needed to meet this challenge.

Such a sustained commitment would not be possible without continued U.S. government support; and the leadership and vision that you and your colleagues have shown for ongoing democracy promotion efforts is greatly appreciated by NDI and other organizations involved in Iraq.

With best regards.

Sincerely,

KENNETH WOLLACK,
President.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH
AND EXCHANGES BOARD,
Washington, DC, April 20, 2006.

Hon. EDWARD KENNEDY,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR KENNEDY: I am writing to thank you for your strong support for democracy assistance in Iraq and your efforts to ensure that this support from the United